

TIME TO PLAY

Putting play
into practice



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RESOURCE BOOK

PUTTING PLAY INTO PRACTICE

The purpose of this resource book is to provide further information and guidance on issues raised in the NUT play policy document *Time to Play?*

There are a variety of ways in which schools and individual teachers can integrate play into their activities to support teaching and learning. This section of the document highlights some key areas where schools can include play in both curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Each key area contains case studies and practical examples of activities, which it is hoped that schools and teachers will find both thought-provoking and useful. A list of sources of further information on each of the key areas is given at the end of each section of this resource book.

PLANNING FOR PLAY IN YOUR SCHOOL

Planning for play is essential. There are seven key objectives¹ for good play provision. They are:

- extending the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it;
- recognising children's need to test boundaries and responding positively to that need;
- managing the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm;
- maximising the range of play opportunities;
- fostering children's respect for others and providing opportunities for social interaction; and
- fostering children's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

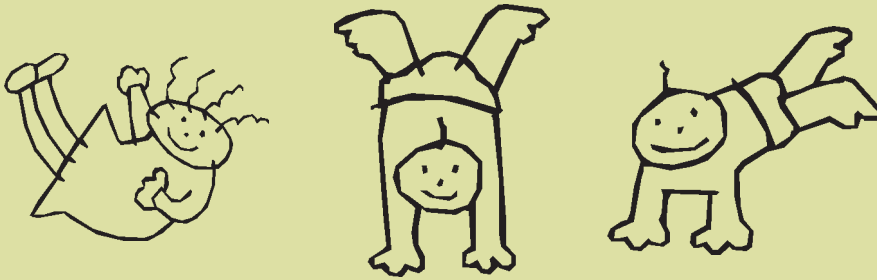
The involvement of all members of the school community, including staff, governors, parents and pupils, is essential if a school policy on play is to be meaningful and become embedded throughout the school's work. Appendix A outlines three professional development activities for staff which would provide a useful starting point for creating a shared understanding of play as a learning medium as well as formulating a school play policy.

The development of a play policy within school will provide a useful means of demonstrating how the school is addressing the Every Child Matters agenda and the fulfilment of every child's potential throughout its work.

¹ Children's Play Council, National Playing Fields Association & Playlink, *Best Play: What Play Provision should do for Children*, 2001

DEVELOPING A PLAY POLICY

Issues/Statements to Expand in Developing a Policy for Play



1. State who/what is the policy for
2. State the value, purposes and aims of play
3. Give information on play, different types and learning potential
4. State how playing links with learning and children's development
5. Where play 'fits' with the curriculum offered, e.g. EYFS, NC
6. Planning for play, purposes and adult responsibilities/roles
7. Adult roles in play, e.g. intervention, interaction
8. Observation, assessment and monitoring through play
9. Outdoor play and welfare/safety/health issues
10. Special Needs/Equal Opportunities/Anti-discriminatory issues
11. Communicating with parents/parents' roles and responsibilities towards play
12. Resources
13. Storage
14. Evaluation of play and periodic review of play policy

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The views of pupils and parents should strongly influence the development of a school play policy. Play-based learning can provide an effective bridge between home and school, as some parents may feel more comfortable supporting their child's learning in what they perceive to be an informal rather than formal way. It may well be necessary to hold an initial meeting for parents and/or produce a special edition of the school newsletter to explain what the school is doing and why.

In order to establish the views of pupils and parents, a range of opportunities should be provided, from the formal, such as questionnaires or a special meeting of the school's council or parents' group, to the informal, such as focus groups or circle time discussions.

These activities and their outcomes could also be recorded on the school's OFSTED School Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) to provide evidence of the school consulting and acting upon the views of pupils and parents.

A school play policy can include:

- the school's objectives for play and their contribution to other school priorities;
- how play may be linked to specified learning outcomes for specific year groups;
- how play-based learning activities would contribute to the development of a personalised learning approach, in terms of meeting the needs of children's individual rates of development and learning styles;
- equal opportunities issues, including ethnicity, gender, special educational needs and cultural diversity;
- the role of teachers and other adults in play activities;
- implications for professional development and support;
- the rules for play activities, including how these are formulated and communicated and any kinds of activities which are encouraged or banned;
- resourcing, including use of indoor and outdoor spaces and time made available for play;
- assessment and recording strategies;
- monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

Evaluation processes can be developed alongside the school's play policy. Together with evaluating quality, effectiveness and impact for children, such processes can include participation levels; access to facilities and opportunities; quality of facilities and activities; and satisfaction levels. Children can be involved in the evaluation process such that they can share their ideas, influence what they do, how it is done and how it can be changed and improved if necessary.

The significant levels of pedagogical skill and organisation and resource demands are illustrated by the example given in the first box on the next page.

Key Stages 1 and 2

A primary school appointed a curriculum coordinator for play across both key stages. She gave advice and support for developing a whole-school approach and identified each teacher's requirements. She drew up a rolling programme of resource acquisitions over a three-year period and was allocated time to play alongside children to model her role and support the children with some of the more demanding technical and constructive equipment. The older children were encouraged to play with the younger ones on a weekly basis to extend the concept of peer tutoring. A further spin-off from this whole-school approach was the redesign of the outdoor play environment, again with additional resources, delineated areas for ball games, chasing games and for sitting. The teachers, mealtime assistants and children learnt traditional games and, within a short space of time, these approaches eradicated behaviour problems. The daily lunchtime line-up outside the headteacher's office became a thing of the past.

Elizabeth Wood and Jane Attfield, *Play, Learning and the Early Childhood Curriculum*, 2005

Both the National Curriculum and the national strategies encourage pupils' active involvement in their own learning. As play is a clear medium for such involvement, it can be relatively straightforward to use play as the chosen pedagogical approach to cover such aspects of the curriculum.

Play in itself does not constitute a curriculum but can be an integral part of the educational experience, as the following table shows:

The Links between Play and Learning²

Cognitive processes and skills

- *Attending, perceiving, observing, recognising, discriminating, imitating, exploring, investigating, concentrating, memorising, retaining, retrieving and recalling information, scanning for information, integrating knowledge and experience, categorisation, classification, making connections and relationships.*
- *Making intelligent use of past experience to formulate a plan of action, reflecting on action, noticing causes and effects, using metacognitive skills and strategies – awareness and conscious control of one's own learning.*
- *Making choices and decisions, constructing knowledge, making sense.*
- *Communicating ideas, meaning, knowledge and understanding.*
- *Creativity, imagination, flexibility, making novel connections.*
- *Creating, recognising and solving problems.*

(continues overleaf)

² Wood, E. and Attfield, J., *Play, Learning and the Early Childhood Curriculum*, Paul Chapman, 2005

- *Convergent and divergent thinking, practice, repetition, rehearsal, consolidation, retuning, accretion, mastery, interpreting.*
- *Communication – through written and spoken language, gestures, mime, signs, symbols and artefacts.*
- *Making and testing hypotheses, predicting, innovation, combining, recombining, reasoning, extrapolating.*
- *Developing transferability, transferring knowledge and skills between similar and different contexts.*

Attitudes and disposition

- Curiosity and interest; motivation – intrinsic and extrinsic, open-mindedness, flexibility, engagement, involvement, enthusiasm, originality, creativity, independence, interdependence; willingness to take risks; ability to struggle and cope with challenge and failure; perseverance, resilience, self-efficacy (can-do orientations).

Influences on learning

- Mood and feeling states; child health and family health; home and community cultures and experiences; parental pressures and expectations; social skills; learning environment – home, school and community; quality of relationships between children, peers and adults; child's and family's orientations to education, socio-economic status.
- Self-systems: self-concept, self-image, self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy.

Lesson planning can make reference to the relationship between play, learning and pupils' wider development:

- the holistic development of the pupil, for example, cognitive, physical, social;
- how this relates to the relevant curriculum frameworks, for example, the National Curriculum programmes of study, national strategies' learning objectives, Foundation Stage areas of learning;
- any cognitive processes which link play and learning which are cross-curricular or cross-phase.

The next table illustrates how the links between development and learning can be tracked through some common learning outcomes.

Development/Learning Promoted by Play

Bergen, Doris (2006) *Reconciling Play and Assessment Standards: how to leave no child behind*. In: Fromberg, Doris Pronin and Bergen, Doris (Eds.) *Play From Birth to Twelve: contexts, perspectives and meanings*, 2nd ed., New York, Routledge, p234 (table 25.1)

Physical	Fitness and health as a life practice	Mastery of fundamental movements	Motor co-ordination for complex tasks	Preparation for actions required for academics and sports	Persistence in practice and focus on increasing skills
Cognitive	Imagination, creativity, ability to risk in thinking	Problem finding and solving	Discrimination, categorisation and concept development	Academic readiness skills	Meta-cognitive awareness and good learning strategies
Language	Verbal fluency and vocabulary growth	Mastery of language sounds, structures, meanings.	Ability to use narrative and inner speech to solve problems	Ability to transform objects symbolically	Pragmatics of communication and meta-linguistic awareness
Social	Knowledge of social scripts and appropriate behaviours	Appropriate role taking in learning situations	Practice in leading and following peers as well as adults	Conflict negotiation skills, self-control and empathy	Understanding of social comparisons, cooperation and competition
Emotional	Appropriate expression of positive and negative emotions	Control of excessive emotions; self-regulation skills.	Growth of self-efficacy and self-esteem in learning situations	Ability to use coping skills, such as humour.	Gaining concepts of fairness, sharing respect for others
Academic Readiness	Ability to use concrete materials to explore spatial, logical and mathematical relationships	Use of a rich range of language and print symbols.	Experience with a wide range of media and ability to express self in that wide range.	Practice using fine motor skills, coordination and self-regulation skills	Increased attention to self-chosen tasks and persistence in completing them

Observation is a key means by which teachers can assess children's learning through play. Key questions for the teacher during observation might include:

- what is the child doing in the activity?
- what is the activity doing for the child?
- what learning processes can be identified?
- has the activity stimulated new learning, or is it providing an opportunity for mastery/revision, or does it reveal what the child already knows, can do and understand?
- how can this information be used to inform future planning?

There are a range of other assessment approaches which may be used during play-based learning activities, which will provide the evidence that teachers need to progress their pupils' learning and satisfy accountability demands. Such approaches include:

- recall or review sessions with pupils;
- video or audio recordings;
- photographs;
- written work, drawings or models etc which have arisen from the play-based activity;
- mapping the pattern or sequence of what took place during the activity;
- questioning or other teacher-pupil interactions.

These sources of evidence can then be used later to formally assess and record the evidence of learning.

The current curriculum provides a scaffolding for and an encouragement to schools to adopt practical play policies. Examples are set out below.

The Role of the Teacher in Play

An important issue for class teachers to consider is their own role in the play activity. This might range from 'laissez-faire', where the teacher simply observes, to a 'didactic' approach, where the play is set and directed by the teacher, or an 'interactionist' approach, where the teacher and pupils are partners in play. Some research³ has suggested that the extent to which children perceive activities to be teacher-led or directed determines whether they view the activity as work, play or learning, even when it might have been planned by the teacher to fulfil all three functions.

As this document demonstrates, play is not a single entity but may be described as multi-faceted or multi-modal, in that it differs according to a variety of factors such as the situation in which the play takes place, the player's current mindset, the type of play occurring and so on. For example, play can be exploratory where the player acquires information and knowledge about the play material or context, creative where the player uses materials to make something or take on a role, problem-solving where the player experiments with ideas or imaginings, or sheer mastery where actions are repeated over and over again in order to cement understanding and support memory.

This has significant implications for the role of the teacher in different forms of play and raises the question: how does the teacher react/intervene/interrelate/communicate with children during play sessions? In fact, how do they 'teach' within play? For example, if the play activity

³ E.g. Ceglowski, D., 'Understanding and Building Upon Children's Perceptions of Play Activities', *Early Childhood Journal*, 25(2), 107-112

is exploratory, the child may want to get on with it and not have adult interference, although it might be useful for adults to interact alongside the child to help them understand the language and ideas associated with what they are doing. When play is creative, the child may want to do this on their own and use their own ideas, which can make teacher intervention or interaction very frustrating to the child. If a problem is encountered during play, however, help and support for the child is needed and they will welcome interaction and communication, especially if the teacher can do it in an interrelated way.

THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Play is a central feature of the Foundation Stage. The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage⁴ contains both principles and practical guidance for early years teachers on the link between play, teaching and learning, including pedagogical strategies for supporting children's learning through play:

Well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors, is a key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge. In playing, they behave in different ways: sometimes their play will be boisterous, sometimes they will describe and discuss what they are doing, sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play ... Through play, in a secure environment with effective adult support, children can:

- *explore, develop and represent learning experiences that help them make sense of the world;*
- *practise and build up ideas, concepts and skills;*
- *learn how to control impulses and understand the need for rules;*
- *be alone, be alongside others or cooperate as they talk or rehearse their feelings;*
- *take risks and make mistakes;*
- *think creatively and imaginatively;*
- *communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems;*
- *express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.*

The new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which will provide a framework for learning and development for children from birth to age five and which is due to be implemented in 2008, places equal importance on play as the key teaching and learning approach in the early years. The consultation document⁵, which was issued in 2006, reproduces the principles expressed above and expands upon them:

Play underpins delivery of all of EYFS and must be planned for children in both indoor and outdoor space. Practitioners should enable all children to participate, enjoy and achieve in a rich, play-based curriculum which fosters their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development...

Children learn by doing, rather than by being told. Learning is a shared process and children learn best when, with the support of a knowledgeable and trusted adult, they are actively involved and interested. Practitioners must therefore ensure a balance of adult-led and freely chosen or child-initiated activities, to be delivered through indoor and outdoor play.

⁴ Qualifications and Curriculum Authority/DfES, *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*, QCA/DfES, 2000

⁵ DWP/DfES, *The Early Years Foundation Stage: Consultation on a Single Quality Framework for Services to Children from Birth to Five*, PPCAPITA, Ref No: 0406/44, 2006



In high quality early years settings, children should be given opportunities to exercise a high level of choice in their activities. During art or construction activities, for example, children should be allowed to choose the materials with which they wish to work, with no pre-conceived idea of what the final product should be. Similarly, in themed play corners, children should be allowed to interpret the equipment and other resources selected by the teacher, rather than being limited to play scenarios devised by the teacher. The teacher can use such child-initiated sessions to observe and record

the learning processes displayed by the children, including how they modify and refine their ideas as they progress through the activity.

Foundation Stage

A reception class in Oldham was outside using the parachute, playing parachute games and singing songs. 'Look, it's like a spider's web,' one child told the teacher. All of the children were very interested to see that the stitching on the parachute was like a spider's web. Due to the interest shown by the children, the teacher decided to do a mini topic on spiders with the group.

She planned lessons for, and changed the environment to include, work on spiders. The group went on spider hunts, drawing on the 'we're going on a bear hunt' story, where they were extremely excited to discover huge, dewy spider webs on the railings around the school. Photographs were taken of the webs and the children then did observational drawings back in the classroom.

They made spider obstacle courses, human-sized webs using string, sang 'incy wincy', used non-fiction books, internet sources and footage from a BBC wildlife documentary to learn more about spiders. They made music in response to a lifelike spider puppet and moved like spiders and in response to their own spider music. The group even showed their new-found information and activities as part of an assembly for the rest of school and parents. The children extended the work into their home life, bringing in their own books, pictures and stories of their experiences with spiders.

The teacher's role in the whole topic was not to dictate what the children would do in the topic, but to provide resources and materials, offer inspiration and praise valuing the children's ideas and interests, and to direct the learning, ensuring that Foundation Stage objectives were being met in the work done. The whole topic was fully cross-curricular, covering all areas of the Foundation Stage and providing for all types of learners. The reason the topic expanded and continued was due to the children's interests, imaginations and sense of value of their own ideas and suggestions. It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience for both the children and their teacher.

NUT class teacher member



THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The emphasis within the revised National Curriculum on developing pupils' creativity, provides a significant opportunity for playful approaches to teaching and learning.

The review of the National Curriculum in 2000 recognised that creativity was an important aim for education. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) worked with 120 teachers in England to investigate how it could develop pupils' creativity through existing schemes of work and lesson plans. It was also influenced heavily by the report *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*.⁶

The current National Curriculum Handbook outlines the importance of creativity:

By providing rich and varied contexts for pupils to acquire, develop and apply a broad range of knowledge, understanding and skills, the curriculum should enable pupils to think creatively and critically, to solve problems and to make a difference for the better. It should give them the opportunity to become creative, innovative, enterprising and capable of leadership to equip them for their future lives as workers and citizens.

It should enable pupils to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities, to manage risk and to cope with change and adversity.

Creative thinking and behaviour can be promoted in all National Curriculum subjects and in religious education.

Pupils who are creative will be prepared for a rapidly changing world, where they may have to adapt to several careers in a lifetime. Many employers want people who see connections, have bright ideas, are innovative, communicate and work well with others and are able to solve problems. In other words, they need creative people.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education and Skills commissioned a review entitled *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* which was carried out by Paul Roberts and published in July 2006. The report outlines a number of key proposals under the following headings: creative portfolios; early years; extended schools; building schools for the future (BSF); leading creative learning; practitioner partnerships; pathways to creative industries; and frameworks and regulation. (The full report is available to download at http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2006/nurturing_creativity.htm).

The QCA has developed a dedicated website which contains practical guidance on how to promote pupils' creativity across the National Curriculum (<http://www.ncaction.org.uk/creativity/index.htm>). In addition, Customise Your Curriculum, a sub-section of the QCA website, provides detailed examples of how English and mathematics can be embedded in other subjects of the National Curriculum, enabling pupils to use these skills in relevant and rewarding contexts. See <http://www.qca.org.uk/8680.html> for more information.

⁶ National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE), *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*, DfEE, 1999

THE NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The Key Stage 3 National Strategy⁷ emphasises *'the importance of teaching to clear, unambiguous objectives in ways which engage pupils in active learning, and securing these in everyday use.'* It sets out the following principles for teaching and learning, many of which could be achieved through a play-based pedagogical approach:

*The Key Stage 3 National Strategy promotes **teaching** that is:*

- *informed by clear, challenging and progressive objectives*
- *direct and explicit*
- *highly interactive*
- *inspiring and motivating*
- *varied in style and distinguished by a fast pace and strong focus*
- *well-pitched to pupils' needs*
- *inclusive and ambitious.*

*The Key Stage 3 National Strategy promotes **learning** that is:*

- *active and highly-motivated*
- *purposeful*
- *creative and imaginative*
- *reflective*
- *secured in use and meaningful in context*
- *increasingly independent*
- *harnessed to personal or group targets.*

Similarly, the revised Primary National Strategy framework⁸ says:

At all key stages, learning can and does happen in a range of ways and in a variety of contextsFor learning in literacy and mathematics to be secure, children need to understand the relevance of what they are learning and need to apply their learning in different contexts. Using and applying their literacy and mathematics knowledge and skills in other subjects and contexts helps reinforce confidence and understanding.

and

The renewed Framework promotes a range of pedagogic approaches, including direct, inductive, experiential, enquiry and problem-solving approaches as well as social or relationship approaches (such as role-play and simulation)... The increased flexibility promoted through the renewed Framework aims to encourage teachers and practitioners in applying their teaching approach and pedagogy according to the needs of learners and the context of learning.

⁷ Key Stage 3 National Strategy electronic framework 2006 www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

⁸ DfES, *Primary Framework for Literacy and Mathematics*, OPSI, 2006

LITERACY

Play integrates speaking, listening, reading and writing and can provide contexts for meaningful literacy activities. Play, fantasy and make-believe are all symbolic activities that support and share many characteristics with the development of literacy. Young children are known to play both with language, by making up nonsense words and sounds, and through language, by using language to communicate with others through play.

Dramatic play can be particularly supportive of literacy development because of the connections between story-making and telling, such as plot, characterisation, sequencing, scripting and editing the dialogue, and interactions to direct the course of the play.

Provision that has relevance to pupils' lives can help them to engage in reading and writing for a variety of purposes in authentic situations – for example, reading and writing brochures, designing cards and posters, writing a menu and taking orders. There is also much potential for developing pupils' literacy skills through cross-curricular projects and themes.

Key Stage 2

Year 6 pupils in a Bristol primary school were involved in acting out their own versions of the life story of John Cabot. This activity involved researching information on the historical background of John Cabot and his voyage as well as costumes and props for the play; finding out about life on board ship; visiting a replica ship; writing their parts and improvisation; learning sea shanties and dances such as the hornpipe; and cooperating with each other in the play, songs and dances. Not only did this activity develop pupils' writing skills, it also met National Curriculum learning objectives for history, geography, art, design and technology, ICT, music and physical education.

National Literacy Strategy teaching objectives linked to play or which would lend themselves to a play-based teaching approach include:

- 'enjoy listening to and using spoken and written language and readily turn to it in their play and learning' (Early Learning goal);
- 'explore familiar themes and characters through improvisation and role-play' (Year 1);
- 'explain ideas and processes using imaginative and adventurous vocabulary and non-verbal gestures to support communication' (Year 2);
- 'empathise with characters and debate moral dilemmas portrayed in texts' (Year 3);
- 'develop and refine ideas in writing using planning and problem-solving strategies' (Year 4);
- 'infer writers' perspectives from what is written and from what is implied' (Year 5);
- 'improvise using a range of drama strategies and conventions to explore themes such as hopes, fears and desires' (Year 6);
- 'use exploratory, hypothetical and speculative talk as a tool for clarifying ideas' (Year 7);
- 'identify links between literary heritage texts and their times, e.g. *the social context of a nineteenth century novel*' (Year 8); and
- 'use a range of drama techniques, including work in role, to explore issues, ideas and meanings e.g. by playing out hypotheses, by changing perspectives' (Year 9).

Special school

A special school in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which catered for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, wanted to see if it could improve pupils' handwriting by focusing on developing their games skills.

The school blocked PE lessons to give pupils daily opportunities to work on their whole body awareness and hand-eye coordination. To support this, pupils took part in daily handwriting practice sessions to refine their fine motor skills.

Break and lunchtimes were restructured to give pupils opportunities to take part in games activities linked to the PE scheme of work, supported by adults, including external coaches.

Following this project, pupils' portfolios of work shared an increase in their pace of learning and in the quality of handwriting, as well as on their hand-eye co-ordination. In particular, the school saw improvements in their letter formation and spacing, drawing skills and perceptual awareness.

How are Schools Using PESS to Raise Achievement Across the Curriculum, QCA 2006

Key Stages 3 and 4

A secondary school in Oldham, with a high proportion of pupils with English as an additional language, wished to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. It developed a variety of play-based approaches to provide opportunities for pupils to consolidate and extend their vocabularies as well as gain confidence in speaking in class.

A number of artefacts were borrowed from the local museum and used to promote speaking and listening skills, for example, one pupil describing an item to another, who had to draw it based on description alone; a *Twenty Questions*-type game in groups to guess what the object was; and drama scenarios based at the museum where pupils took turns in playing tour guide and visitors. Written work was incorporated into these activities, such as detailed descriptions of the artefacts for a museum guide book and poetry inspired by favourite items. Technical terminology used to describe the artefacts also reinforced work in other areas of the curriculum, such as history and science.

Much use was made of role play and drama when studying texts, such as devising an *America's Most Wanted* programme based on characters from Edgar Allan Poe; re-creating the trial of Boo Radley in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, including pupils taking on the roles of the jury and debating the verdict; role-playing parents' evening for Billy, his mother and brother in *Kes*; and a *Trisha*-style TV show based on *Macbeth*. Such an approach led to increased engagement in and enjoyment of the texts, with more perceptive and detailed written work produced.

The Foundation Stage places strong emphasis on the use of play as an effective strategy for teaching and learning within the Communication, Language and Literacy area of learning. The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage⁹ advises:

... in play, children are given the chance to imagine and to recreate experience. As they explore situations, events and ideas, for example building with blocks or making a journey on vehicles, they improve their competence with language through social interaction, repetition and consolidation. Language is developed

further and links made with literacy if, for example, in the above types of play, children are also encouraged to look at maps and plans and relevant reference books. As they play, children will practise doing and saying things that they are not really able to do, such as making a journey in space. They can capture their actions in drawing, early writing or painting, and retell events to friends, practitioners and parents. They are learning that pictures and words are symbolic ways of preserving meaning.

Themed play corners which encourage literacy development in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1

Supermarket: store labels e.g. wall and shelf; product containers; leaflets and catalogues; pens, pencils, markers, notepads

Bank: wall signs, cheque books and forms; leaflets and posters; pens, pencils, markers

Restaurant: cookbooks; menus; pens, pencils and notepads

Post Office: stationery, envelopes, stamps; leaflets and posters; pencils, pens, markers; wall signs; address labels

Vets: pens, pencils, markers; appointment book; wall signs; labels and patient charts for animals; prescription forms; magazines for waiting room

Airport/aeroplane: pens, pencils, markers; tickets and luggage tags; boarding cards and passports; in-flight magazines; safety instructions; maps

Sources of further information

The British Film Institute publishes a wide range of teaching packs, teaching guides and resources (many of which are free) to support the use of moving image media in schools and colleges. See <http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/> for more details.

The National Centre for Language and Literacy website <http://www.ncll.org.uk/> offers schools a search tool to find authors, illustrators, poets and storytellers who are keen to get into the classroom to explain their craft, inspire and work with children.

The Teaching English website <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/about.shtml> is a co-production between the British Broadcasting Corporation and the British Council. The project is non-commercial and as such all content and material on the site is and will always be free to access. The site contains a wide range of materials, activities and ideas for teaching, with particular emphasis on speaking and listening activities, which would be useful for both native English speakers and those with English as an Additional Language.

Teachers TV (<http://www.teachers.tv/node>) has an considerable bank of downloadable video extracts to support English teaching, including drama simulations and developing literacy through a playful cross-curricular approach.

⁹ Qualifications and Curriculum Authority/DfES, *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*, QCA/DfES, 2000

NUMERACY

A number of advantages to using a play-based approach to learning in mathematics have been identified. These include offering pupils a genuine purpose for learning, as by using 'real life' maths problems in which pupils are interested, they are motivated to learn new skills in order to use them immediately. Some aspects of mathematics are very abstract, therefore pupils have to be supported to make the links between concrete and abstract concepts. This can often be done using a starting point that makes human and practical sense to children in a context provided by play.

A play-based approach to maths provides pupils with a valuable and pleasurable opportunity to repeat things and gain mastery over actions and ideas, to raise questions, discuss and clarify ideas as well as providing time for new ideas to be assimilated. This is particularly important for aspects of maths where understanding depends on having understood precedents.

Such views would appear to be supported by the national strategies, which recommend that there is *'a high proportion of direct, interactive teaching'* and that *'in the main part of the lesson, in particular, there is scope for considerable variety and creativity, with a different interplay of work with the whole class, groups, pairs and individuals on different days'*.

National Numeracy Strategy teaching objectives linked to play or which would lend themselves to a play-based teaching approach include:

- 'use developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems' (Early Learning Goal);
- 'use vocabulary related to time; order days of the week and months; read the time to the hour and half hour' (Year 1);
- 'follow and give instructions involving position, direction and movement' (Year 2);
- 'represent information in a puzzle or problem using numbers, images or diagrams: use these to find a solution and present it in context' (Year 3);
- 'suggest a line of enquiry and the strategy needed to follow it; collect, organise and interpret selected information to find answers' (Year 4);
- 'describe the occurrence of familiar events using the language of chance or likelihood' (Year 5);
- 'represent and interpret sequences, patterns and relationships involving numbers and shapes; suggest and test hypotheses; construct and use simple expressions and formulae in words and then symbols' (Year 6);
- 'make and justify estimates and approximations to calculations' (Year 7);
- 'use logical argument to establish the truth of a statement' (Year 8); and
- 'construct functions arising from real-life problems and plot their corresponding graphs; interpret graphs arising from real situations' (Year 9).

Children's success in solving maths problems usually depends on their embeddedness in familiar, everyday practices. Play activities can provide a range of contexts for integrating maths into everyday practices that children encounter in and out of school. This is explicitly recognised and encouraged in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage¹⁰, which says:

It is important that children's experiences of mathematics are enjoyable and meaningful and that their confidence is always fostered through building from what they know, understand and are able to do. Everyday contexts for purposeful mathematics help to generate enthusiasm. These will include stories and rhymes on a mathematical theme, with props, actions or humour that children and practitioners enjoy.



Key Stage 1 and 2

A primary school in Cheshire introduced Excellence and Enjoyment days, where areas of the curriculum were combined and teachers taught lessons to year groups based on a common theme, with teachers working with four year groups at different points in the day.

Four different year groups in Key Stages 1 and 2 looked at symbolism and shape in religion, combining work on mathematics, technology and religious education. After studying the symmetry of a number of religious buildings and icons, such as Islamic temples, Anglican cathedrals, the Star of David and the Buddhist Dharma Wheel, pupils were encouraged to design their own 'special places', using a variety of construction materials to create two and three dimensional shapes. Differentiation was achieved in a variety of ways, including complexity of materials and equipment used, type and range of questions posed to pupils and extension play activities for the more able and/or older.

Not only did this initiative engage and motivate pupils, it was also an important professional development activity for staff, which enabled those who were less confident about a particular area of the curriculum to gain ideas and expertise from colleagues.

Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

The teacher wanted her pupils to use what they had learnt about mass, area, volume and enlargement to solve a demanding mathematical problem. She was keen to use a real life situation in which they could see the relevance of their knowledge, rather than just using a textbook approach. Inspiration came as she watched a TV advertisement for new purple sweets that, it was claimed, were now four times larger. As she wondered whether this was actually true, it struck her that here was a perfect

opportunity for pupils to use their knowledge in an innovative, interesting way to test this out for themselves. She bought packets of the new larger purple sweets and the smaller, original ones, she planned an activity to last two 40-minute lessons.

(continues overleaf)



¹⁰ Qualifications and Curriculum Authority/DfES, *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*, QCA/DfES, 2000

She asked the class to get into pairs and generate possible ideas for five minutes how they could prove or disprove the claim. As they worked, the teacher walked around the room listening to the pupils' discussions and challenging their ideas with open-ended questions, such as 'How would you do this? What equipment would you need? The teacher then brought the class back together to share their ideas on how to prove or disprove the claim.

The pupils came up with a wide range of suggestions that drew on their knowledge of mass, area, volume and enlargement. They listened to each other's suggestions for testing the claim and asked questions for clarification, showing excellent questioning skills. Back in their pairs, they then discussed the different approaches suggested by the class, chose one that they wanted to try and planned what they were going to do (including the equipment they needed).

The next lesson while the pupils tried out different theories, the teacher went around the room asking open-ended questions to help develop their thinking. Mass figured highly, with many pupils weighing the sweets and making comparisons. Some based their calculations on the number of nuts inside. Some tried dropping the sweets in water to see how much liquid was displaced. Others made various measurements of the dimensions of the sweets in order to estimate the volume.

Towards the end of the lesson the teacher asked the pupils to record their results on the board and to talk about the methods they had used to investigate the manufacturer's claim. Some of the pupils were able to explain their reasoning clearly and persuade convincingly. At the end of the discussion the class concluded that the advert was true. The lesson finished with the pupils eating the sweets, much to their delight!

The teacher let the pupils choose how to write up the work. They chose a variety of styles, including diagrams, words and calculations.

Extract from *Tasty Maths*. See www.ncaction.org.uk/creativity/11-tasty-maths.pdf or QCA/O4/12 for the full leaflet on this activity.

Sources of further information

There is a wide range of commercial materials available which use a play-based approach via interactive software to make maths more enjoyable, for example: <http://www.numbergym.co.uk> and <http://www.topmarks.co.uk/Interactive.aspx?s=maths&a=ks2> provide a repository of free maths whiteboard resources.

The Millennium Maths Project, a partnership between the Faculties of Mathematics and Education at Cambridge, is a comprehensive maths education initiative. See <http://nrich.maths.org/public/index.php> for a wide range of free mathematics enrichment resources (puzzles, problems, investigations, games) for ages 5 to 19.

The London Mathematical Society's directory of maths enrichment resources for Key Stages 1-4 may be viewed at <http://www.lms.ac.uk>

<http://www.mathszone.co.uk/> acts as a portal to a range of free internet resource for teaching maths in primary and secondary schools.

SCIENCE

The idea that, simply by providing a set of stimulating resources, children will spontaneously discover scientific principles, has long been discredited. Recognising opportunities and planning for a playful approach to science needs to be a shared understanding across teaching staff and classroom assistants.

Scientific processes, such as exploration, observation and experimentation, are essential elements of early years science. It is important to note, however, that the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage does not specify which scientific knowledge is to be acquired. Nor does it consider it to be a 'subject' in its own right, but includes it in the broad Knowledge and Understanding about the World area of learning. For this area of learning, it advises that particular attention should be given to:

activities based on first hand experiences that encourage exploration, observation, problem solving, prediction, critical thinking, decision making and discussion.

The National Curriculum also emphasises an experiential approach to learning, for which play-based activities would be appropriate:

During Key Stage 1 pupils observe, explore and ask questions about living things, materials and phenomena. They begin to work together to collect evidence to help them answer questions and to link this to simple scientific ideas. They evaluate evidence and consider whether tests or comparisons are fair.

During Key Stage 2 pupils learn about a wider range of living things, materials and phenomena. They begin to make links between ideas and to explain things using simple models and theories. They apply their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas to familiar phenomena, everyday things and their personal health.

During Key Stage 3 pupils build on their scientific knowledge and understanding and make connections between different areas of science. They use scientific ideas and models to explain phenomena and events, and to understand a range of familiar applications of science... They evaluate their work, in particular the strength of the evidence they and others have collected. They select and use a wide range of reference sources. They communicate clearly what they did and its significance. They learn how scientists work together on present day scientific developments and about the importance of experimental evidence in supporting scientific ideas.

Foundation Stage

These games can be played with a collection of packaging, which include items made from card, paper, metal, wood and plastic.

Where Shall I Put it?: The teacher begins by handling and sorting the collection, perhaps to 'tidy up'. He/she asks the children to help decide how to sort the objects into groups. He/she may make mistakes which the children help to correct.

(continues overleaf)

It's a Mystery: The teacher puts one object from the collection into a 'feely bag' or closed box without the children seeing. The box is passed round and the children are given the opportunity to feel, shake and listen before asking one question about its hidden contents. If possible, small groups should be provided with their own box to ensure interest is maintained.

Domino Game: This game can be used to identify similarities and differences. Each child holds an object from the collection. One child is asked to place his or her object on the floor. The others are then asked if their object is different in any way from the object on the floor. One child is asked to place their object alongside the first and say why it is different. The process continues until all the objects are on the floor. The game can also be played like traditional dominoes, where two objects are placed end to end because they are similar. This continues until a linked chain of objects has been placed on the floor.

Moyles, J. (Ed.), *The Excellence of Play*, 2005

Key Stage 2 (Year 5)

The teacher planned this 30-minute lesson with the aim of showing the pupils that scientists may legitimately interpret the same data differently and therefore disagree. She also wanted to begin to show the pupils that scientific knowledge can change, given new evidence or new interpretations of existing evidence.

The teacher switched off the light and projected three overhead transparencies onto the classroom wall, one after the other. The first slide showed two sets of bird tracks heading towards each other without actually meeting. The second showed two sets of tracks converge and meet, becoming blurred on an area of ground that had been 'scuffed up'. The final slide was similar to the second, but also showed a single set of tracks leaving the scuffed-up area.

The teacher asked the class to look carefully at each picture and, working on their own, to produce a report (in any form) that answered three questions: 'What do the pictures show?' 'What might be happening in the pictures?' (and finally) 'What does this exercise have to do with science?'

When they had finished, the teacher asked the pupils to share their ideas with the rest of the class. In total, there were 27 different explanations of what might have made the tracks, ranging from chickens, blackbirds and penguins, to burglars and even aliens. After the main discussion, the teacher asked the pupils how they thought this activity was linked with science. Some suggested 'observation', 'investigation', 'proving what happened' and 'being creative'. Ines' response was: 'Because you have to think what is happening with just a bit of evidence.'

Extract from *The Mystery of the Disappearing Tracks*. See <http://www.ncaction.org.uk/creativity/16-disappearing-tracks.pdf> or QCA/05/1592 for the full leaflet on this activity.

Sources of further information:

- The Science Alliance, which currently involves primary schools in Brighton and Hove and Kirklees, is looking for other schools to participate in this initiative which emphasises experimental and fun learning: <http://www.creativitycentre.com/sciencealliance/>
- Goldsworthy, A. and Feasey, R., *Making Sense of Primary Science Investigations*, Revised Edition, Association for Science Education, 1997

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SCHOOL SPORTS

Exercise play enhances the physical development of young muscles for strength and endurance and for skill and economy of movement, as well as contributing to improving overall physical fitness. There are also a number of studies¹¹ to suggest that exercise play results in improved attention to classroom tasks.

This area of the curriculum is particularly important, given current concerns about declining levels of physical fitness and increasing obesity in children and young people.

The QCA Physical Education and School Sports (PESS) initiative is part of the Government's overall strategy to increase the percentage of 5-16 year olds who spend a minimum of two hours each week on high-quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum. Many schools involved in the QCA PESS initiative have chosen to focus on improving behaviour through PE and school sport. Every school that did so saw an increase in positive behaviour and a reduction in negative behaviour (some primary schools were able to dispense with poor behaviour logs altogether). There were dramatic falls in the number of pupils in detention and the number of aggressive incidents reported. At one infant school, for example, the number of aggressive incidents at lunchtime fell from 226 to just 40 a week over the course of the school's first year in the initiative.

Closely linked to these improvements in behaviour were better attitudes to learning. Every school involved in the investigation reported significant improvements in pupils' confidence, self-esteem, desire to learn, concentration and time on task as a result of improving the quality of PE and school sport. This has had an impact not only in PE lessons, but also across the curriculum.

The project found that the most successful strategy for using PESS to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning, at both primary and secondary levels, was to provide structured, purposeful physical activities during breaks and at lunchtimes.

Key Stages 3 and 4

A girls' comprehensive school in Birmingham wanted to deal with the cultural challenges of getting Muslim girls involved in PE and school sport. It was also keen to improve pupils' general fitness and health.

The key objective of this work was to encourage Year 10 pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning through the introduction of a sport education approach.

(continues overleaf)

¹¹ E.g. Pellegrini, A.D. and Davis, P. 'Relations Between Children's Playground and Classroom Behaviour', *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 63 86-95, 1993

Pupils said that they wanted to take more responsibility for their own learning, so the school decided to deliver dance in Year 10 through a sport education approach. The pupils took on different responsibilities within the group and choreographed their own dance piece for assessment.

The pupils worked constructively and creatively in their group to choreograph and improve aspects of their dance performance. They succeeded in the assessment task specifically directed towards National Curriculum PE aspects of 'selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas' and 'evaluating and improving performance'.

Their social development and attitude to learning also benefited from the initiative. Pupils were keen to continue taking a more active role in their learning in the future. They learnt to compromise, negotiate and consider different viewpoints. They set their own goals for each lesson and supported each other in the group to produce a final performance piece for assessment.

The Year 10 pupils showed much more commitment to, and enthusiasm for, their dance lessons. They felt that their views had been listened to and several of them demonstrated better attitudes to learning as a result. With pupils expressing support for this approach, the school has now decided to extend sport education to other activity areas.

Sources of further information

The QCA website <http://www.qca.org.uk/pess/> contains a wealth of practical guidance and case studies to not only improve the quality of physical education and school sport but also to make cross-curricular links and the benefits to behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning.

CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

The Creative Partnerships initiative encourages schools to work with creative practitioners in long term sustained relationships, to develop a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. The programme is managed by the Arts Council England and is funded by the DfES and the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). The aims of the programme are to develop:

- the creativity of young people, raising their aspirations and achievements;
- the skills of teachers and their ability to work with creative practitioners;
- schools' approaches to culture, creativity and partnership working; and
- the skills, capacity and sustainability of the creative industries.

Key Stages 1 and 2

Through Creative Partnerships, a primary school in London has worked with the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (GSMD) on the Create and Inspire Programme, which focused on children in Year 1 and 2 classes.

The emphasis of the project was on the professional development of the teaching staff: to create a more innovative project that would inspire the school's music teachers and to encourage the teaching staff to embrace working more creatively within the school, particularly giving them more confidence in using music within literacy teaching and other core skill areas.

(continues opposite)

Work with each class began with discussions involving the children in shaping the project. The starting point for Year 1 classes was the story of *The Three Little Pigs* and for Year 2, Michael Morpurgo's book *Long Way Home*.

For the GSMD tutors, the objective was to introduce the children to the project, get to know them and gauge their level of musicality and creativity, and to start exploring the stories. The first sessions focused on learning songs. In the second session, in addition to learning and singing songs taught to them by the GSMD tutors, the children began to explore the various characters in the stories both musically and physically and how characters and their emotions could be portrayed musically and dramatically, beginning the first steps in the creative process.

Groups of children were then engaged in creating poems that were written up and, with the addition of music, developed into songs inspired by the two books. Each Year 1 class focused on one of the three little pigs' houses – made from brick, straw or sticks. Work with Year 2 children followed a similar pattern, inspired by the tale of a girl who invents stories in *Long Way Home*.

Over the four sessions, the children learned their own songs, and many more including several in Swahili. They also learned how to use their bodies to make percussive noises through clapping and slapping various body parts, and various actions to complement the songs. They made hats and structures to represent the pigs' three houses. The work took place with piano and drum accompaniment provided by the GSMD tutors who, from the outset, were also considering how the various pieces would be linked to create a final performance.

The project culminated with two performances and the creation of a resource pack for teachers comprising a CD, photographs and lesson plans.

Key Stage 3 and 4

A secondary school in Birmingham wanted to ensure that Creative Partnerships work was not limited to arts subjects. The school's Science and Art Departments worked together to transform a dull corridor into an interactive learning experience for all pupils, linking into aspects of the science curriculum.

The school, working with the neighbourhood arts charity artSites Birmingham, wanted to explore different ways that creative projects could have a long term effect on the school environment through the arts.

The finished corridor stimulated many positive comments and debates within school and continues to be used as a teaching resource. This project was so successful that different departments within the school now want to develop interesting inter-departmental collaborations.

Sources of further information

Further information on accessing the Creative Partnerships programme in your area and additional case studies and examples of projects are available at www.creative-partnerships.com.

BEHAVIOUR

The current curriculum, test and examination demands on pupils in both primary and secondary schools have led many teachers to report increasingly inappropriate pupil behaviour within the classroom.

The NUT, in its Behaviour Charter *Learning to Behave*,¹² calls for an independent review of the curriculum and its assessment; a practical, personalised entitlement for all young people; and school ownership of the Every Child Matters agenda. Many schools are moving in that direction without waiting for national changes.

The NUT believes that playful approaches can improve behaviour outcomes in schools in two ways. Playful approaches to classroom pedagogy, planning and practice can engage and motivate pupils in a way which more formal teaching styles do not.

Teachers can consult pupils about any behavioural problems arising at breaktimes. As part of the consultation, which can be led by pupils themselves as a class project or through the school council, views could be sought on ways in which the playground setting could be changed in order to prevent such behaviour occurring. It is important to include the pupils at every stage of the process in order for the outcomes to be most effective. Three practical examples are set out below.

Foundation Stage / Key Stages 1 and 2

A primary school has developed a programme for PSHE called SPACE Time, which was devised to aid transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage, in particular the fears expressed by some of the children about moving up into a large playground. Time is set aside every afternoon for each class to use its both its indoor and outdoor areas for an informal learning activity, such as playing with musical instruments, taking part in dance or using a designated area to practice ball skills. Collaboration between pupils in different classes is encouraged. This approach has been reported to have helped pupils to develop friendships, contributed to pupils' health and well-being and improved pupils' sense of achievement and identity.

Key Stages 1 and 2

A school in the centre of a large housing estate in the North East of England has set up a sustainable outdoor classroom. The money for the project has been secured through a bid to the Area Investment Fund regeneration money. The outdoor classroom teaches pupils in a practical way about conservation, climate change and the natural world.

Vandalism at the school no longer exists and no pupil has been excluded for nine years.

¹² National Union of Teachers, *Learning to Behave*, 2005, NUT

Key Stages 1 and 2

At our school, we trained the lunchtime supervisors and two of them became fully trained play leaders. They organised and trained the other lunchtime supervisors.

The results were:

- *fewer lunchtime incidents;*
- *pupils were occupied and looked forward to lunch break;*
- *developed team skills, caring attributes. The good attributes towards each other were contained in the classroom.*

There was no need to shorten lunchtime break. Therefore, all staff had a full hour lunchbreak.

(NUT primary head teacher)

Sources of further information

The Playlink website, www.playlink.org.uk, provides information on promoting Play and has a range of interesting and provocative photographs depicting both high and poor quality play spaces.

Further guidance on projects is available on the Learning Through Landscapes website at www.ltl.org.uk.

Further information and practical guidance on practice and courses is available on the Play Therapy UK website at www.playtherapy.org.uk.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING (SEAL) PROGRAMME

The DfES SEAL materials aim to develop the underpinning qualities and skills that help promote positive behaviour and effective learning. The materials focus on five social and emotional aspects of learning: self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills.

SEAL guidance booklet advice to schools

Social, emotional and behavioural skills underlie almost every aspect of school, home and community life, including effective learning and getting on with other people. They are fundamental to school improvement. Where children have good skills in these areas, and are educated within an environment supportive to emotional health and well-being, they will be motivated to, and equipped to:

- *be effective and successful learners;*
- *make and sustain friendships;*
- *deal with and resolve conflict effectively and fairly;*
- *solve problems with others or by themselves;*

- *manage strong feelings such as frustration, anger and anxiety;*
- *be able to promote calm and optimistic states that promote the achievement of goals;*
- *recover from setbacks and persist in the face of difficulties;*
- *work and play cooperatively;*
- *compete fairly and win and lose with dignity and respect for competitors;*
- *recognise and stand up for their rights and the rights of others;*
- *understand and value the differences and commonalities between people, respecting the right of others to have beliefs and values different from their own.*

Sources of Further Information

The DfES SEAL materials may be downloaded from www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/banda/seal/

BOISTEROUS PLAY

Many teachers have reported concerns about the relationship between play and formal learning because it is perceived as too boisterous, erratic and disparate for teachers to cope with in the context of the classroom.

Lack of space available for role play indoors means that teachers usually need to moderate children's role-play behaviour and reduce noise levels to acceptable classroom levels. Research by Dr Sue Rogers¹³ reported that 'containing play' is both an issue for teachers and an inhibiting factor for the role play of boys in particular, as it was often characterised by loud, aggressive and physical behaviour and encompassed as much space as possible. This usually resulted in adult interventions which varied from terminating the play to attempting to work with the play.

The research suggested that the 'poverty of space' within primary schools may be inadvertently disadvantaging boys, as they are often unable to express their role play interests within the confines of the classroom. This had led teachers involved in the research project to develop role play more specifically in the outdoor play areas, both to free up teachers and children from the confines of their indoor environment and to minimise teacher/pupil conflict. The teachers also considered their own attitudes to the well-documented differences between boys' and girls' play.¹⁴

The research recommends the development of outdoor play spaces to enable children to create play spaces for themselves and to exercise greater choice over materials, locale and play mates. Such an approach encourages girls to take on more active roles and engage in more construction activities as part of their role play, while enabling boys' play to develop with fewer disruptions to those around them and fewer instances of conflict with adults.

¹³ Rogers, S, Woods, P and Evans, J., *Role Play in Reception Classes: Pupil and Teacher Perspectives*, Economic and Social Research Council, 2005.

¹⁴ E.g. Skelton, C. and Hall, E., *The Development of Gender Roles in Young Children: A Review of Policy and Literature*, Equal Opportunities Commission, 2001.

Whilst it is true that there are only certain forms of play which are appropriate in constrained classroom contexts with 30 (or more) children, it may be possible to harness boisterous play, often a feature of boys' play witnessed in the playground, as a powerful learning medium. This is also important in terms of counteracting play fighting which can lead to real fighting when tempers become frayed.

The following example illustrates how teachers' and head teachers' professional knowledge and experience used the opportunity presented by a group of boys' boisterous play to develop a personalised learning culture within the school, offering choice and flexibility in learning to meet the personalised learning needs of every child. By using research evidence about play to inform teaching and learning, the head teacher established creative, responsive and effective approaches to learning and teaching, which enabled all pupils to achieve success and become engaged in their own learning and promoted inclusion, diversity and access.

Extending children's learning through imaginative play

The headteacher of a small nursery school worked very hard to maintain the high quality of child-initiated work she values for her pupils over a period when there was an almost complete change of staff. The new teachers and nursery nurses were not as experienced as the staff they replaced, and in most cases had not been trained in how to extend children's learning through play. The headteacher therefore needed to lead by example.

The arrival of many new staff coincided with an unusually high turnover of full-time children in the school. The new group was predominantly boys, most of whom were learning English as an additional language. The headteacher observed that three boys, all now attending full time, were beginning to play together at the bottom of the garden. Their play, which was centred on Spiderman adventures, involved lots of rushing about, falling over and quarrelling. Based on her knowledge of recent research, the headteacher wanted to counter the tendency of some staff to ban this kind of superhero play, but knew she needed to help the children to develop their ideas. She started by sharing an encyclopaedia of mythology with them, and encouraged them to think of ways of overpowering Baba Yaga, their chosen monster. She suggested they should employ reason rather than relying on weapons, since the witch was so strong.

The children constructed increasingly elaborate traps for Baba Yaga from the open-ended resources available in the nursery school garden, and talked at length about ways of improving their strategies when looking at photographic records of their improvised contraptions. They articulated their ideas in relation to what they were doing, and their planning, creation and review developed in complexity over the following days and weeks in response to the stimulus provided by the headteacher through her open-ended questions. This provided convincing evidence, for parents as well as staff, of the need of all young children, especially those in the early stages of learning English, to express and explore their thoughts through action. It also encouraged other children, who adopted different villains, to join in until most of the full-time children became engaged in the play. The linked activities expanded across many areas of provision and took up most of the day.

(continues overleaf)

The children's sophisticated social development became evident to the staff, who could see how far they had moved from the quarrels of the early days. Even the youngest children showed a great deal of mutual support as they explored the boundary between fantasy and reality. Children's awareness of moral issues developed from initial simplistic distinctions between good and evil to thinking about forgiveness and redemption. They found increasingly effective ways of following up their complex ideas, including searching for information in books, 2D and 3D representation, expressive movement and emergent writing.

Guided by the headteacher, other staff became involved in extending the children's ideas in ways that matched and extended the underlying structures of their thinking. They helped children to relate to rules of engagement through demonstrations of fencing and chess, to build up an understanding of ancient weaponry through a museum visit, and to work out puzzles and mazes at first hand.

Through this work, which developed over a year, new staff came to appreciate the importance of knowledge of individual children as well as of the curriculum, and the value of following up children's interests through carefully resourced play. They developed confidence in using content that actively engaged the children, thus helping them to gain skills and understanding as well as knowledge across all areas of learning. Through direct leadership of learning and teaching, the headteacher was able to demonstrate the value of open-ended resources and uninterrupted time. She introduced parents, governors and other visitors as well as the staff to a deeper understanding of rigorous responsive teaching in the early years. This meant that they came to discern the underlying principles, value the processes of learning, sustain children's motivation to explore and experiment, and appreciate the importance of allowing uninterrupted time for consolidation as well as extension of skills and knowledge.

National College for School Leadership, *National Standards for Headteachers in Focus: Nursery Schools*, 2006

Sources of further information

Moyles, J. (Ed.), *The Excellence of Play*, Open University Press, 2005

Wood, E. and Attfield, J., *Play, Learning and the Early Childhood Curriculum*, Paul Chapman, 2005

THERAPEUTIC PLAY

Therapeutic play has a valuable function in preventing slight or mild learning or behavioural problems becoming worse. Therapeutic play may also be used as a method of detecting more serious problems that may be dealt with by referring pupils on to a play therapist, child psychotherapist or other mental health specialist.

Some studies¹⁵ indicate that 20 per cent of children have some form of psychological problem and that 70 per cent of these are helped through the use of psychological-based therapies such as play and creative arts.

¹⁵ E.g. Rutter, M., Cox., A et al, 'Attainment and Adjustment in Two Geographical Areas: The Prevalence of Psychiatric Disorder', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 126: 493-509, 1975

Play therapists are trained and qualified and can support practitioners in schools. They use tools as part of the basic play therapy toolkit which is based on the set of competencies developed by Play Therapy UK. The main tools are: creative visualisation, art, storytelling, sand tray, music, dance and movement, drama therapy, puppets, masks and clay.

Sources of further information

Play Therapy UK, Fern Hill Centre, Fairwarp, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 3BU
Tel: 01825 712312. Email:ptukorg@aol.com. Website: <http://www.playtherapy.org.uk/>

BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE AND THE PRIMARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Both the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Primary Capital programmes offer schools the opportunity to improve their play provision. As most projects within the first and second waves of the BSF project are still in the planning stages, staff, pupils and parents can still influence the design of the school to ensure that there are appropriate outdoor spaces and provision, and that classrooms allow for flexibility within the curriculum, such as role play areas and space for large indoor construction or tactile play opportunities.

If your school is involved with a BSF project, it is essential that staff and pupils have a say in the planning process and procedures from the start. Many NUT members have reported that they were disappointed with the end results of building projects where they were consulted at the beginning but their views were not included in the final building design. In many cases this has led to staff and pupils being left to work within inappropriate buildings and school outdoor spaces.

Schools need to ensure that they are involved at all stages of planning for new school buildings and outside spaces under both the Building Schools for the Future programme and the Primary Capital programme. Schools may wish to seek advice on how best to plan for play from organisations such as Learning Through Landscapes, Playlink and the Children's Play Council. School grounds can also be transformed into environments which positively encourage play.

Key Stage 3 and 4

A community school in London in Phase 1 of BSF received a new state-of-the-art sports hall as part of the BSF Quick Win programme. Better facilities will enable school staff to develop further the range of pedagogies and creative, innovative teaching styles that they are currently pioneering through their role as a training school.

A community high school in Phase 2 of BSF has involved staff, pupils, governors and parents working together with the architects on the designs for the new school. After carrying out extensive preparatory work, the school met with the architects for a design day. This involved everybody in the school community looking at the five outcomes from the Every Child Matters agenda and linking them in terms of a building design. For example, under the Be Healthy outcome, the pupils stated that they wanted their new school to have good ventilation and lots of natural light.

It is also important to consider provision for play in the school grounds, whether or not your school is involved in the BSF initiative.

Key Stage 1 and 2

A Leicester primary school, through both the School Grounds of the Future and Grounds for Improvement programmes, transformed its grounds from blank tarmac to an oasis in the city. The development of the grounds included: traversing walls; sling-shot basketball posts; magnetic wall games; picnic benches; and cricket stumps.

The school has seen many spin offs through their grounds project. These include improvements in behaviour, better cooperative play, pupils who settle down to lessons quicker, and increased interest in the school from the local community.

A primary school in London found that at playtimes it was mostly boys who were running in the playground, whilst the girls were sitting around the edge of the space. The school decided to utilise a hill within the school grounds which had grass and trees. Once the girls began using this area they were much more active, using skipping ropes and running.

Overall behaviour at lunchtimes improved considerably through the use of this natural play space.

Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and 2

There is very little bad behaviour since we installed our adventure play area equipment – no surprise! We have now built a fort, a Viking ship and expansive equipment that provides lots of challenge, choice and lots of fun for pupils. Our local builder constructed the different pieces of equipment and that considerably reduced the cost. We also have a mound area on our field and a den area to hide in. The pupils have barrels and tyres to play with also, in the next few days, we are also going to add planks, boxes and mini-ramps. Our school council has contributed to the building of the play facilities by making suggestions and deciding on how to share time on the fort. Our next phase starting this week will see us build a mini-monkey bar piece of apparatus for our FS2 children. We named the first phase of our development Bywater Valley, after our site manager who made a lot of interesting suggestions.

(NUT primary head teacher member)

Sources of Further Information

Further information about Building Schools for the Future designs and projects can be found at www.bsf.gov.uk/

The NUT advises that where members require additional advice and guidance on any issues relating to Building Schools for the Future or the Primary Capital Programme they should contact their NUT Regional Office.

Further information about the School Grounds of the Future project can be found at www.ltl.org.uk

BREAK AND LUNCHTIME ACTIVITIES

The quality of pupil play at lunchtimes and play times should not be taken for granted by schools. Many schools are now reviewing the layout of playgrounds and outdoor spaces in order to provide better facilities and opportunities for pupil play during breaktimes. Improving the environment and equipment to facilitate greater opportunities and better quality play provision can lead to improved behaviour both at breaktimes and when pupils return to the classroom.



Special school

When I worked as a head teacher in a maintained special school for children with severe and complex learning difficulties, much of what we did was through play. However, one particular success we had was developing lunchtime play. Lunchtime supervisors were paid to come in for half a day on one of the training days each year where, amongst other things, they were trained in play skills. Also, the school purchased a range of outdoor small equipment (ball, hoops etc) for use in the main playground (used in rotation so the children did not get bored), while a walled area (used by younger/more vulnerable children) was developed with static play equipment. Lunchtime supervisors were encouraged to engage the children in play activities rather than just supervising.

(NUT special head teacher member)

Key Stage 3 and 4

A community college in East Sussex recognised that pupils had little opportunity to take part in physical activities at lunchtime and felt that this was causing issues with behaviour during the lunch break and in afternoon lessons.

The school installed six basketball rings for pupils to use at break and lunchtimes. It opened the gym so that Junior Sports Leader Award pupils could coordinate a lunchtime activities programme and run sessions. It also opened up the all-weather pitch for pupils to use, supervised by PE staff. Over time, these measures were supplemented by a range of clubs and supervised activities, such as table tennis, dance and a booster trampoline class for GCSE pupils. Two members of staff who were not in the PE department supervised an area of the school with basketball courts.

The school brought in a rule to stop pupils being indoors during lunchtime unless they were involved in a specific activity supervised or run by a teacher. Any teacher who ran or supervised an activity was paid to do so from the lunchtime supervisory budget.

(continues overleaf)



As a result of the new facilities and activities on offer, more pupils took part in physical activity at lunchtimes. Behaviour improved and there was very little negative behaviour at lunchtimes. Rooms were left tidy and ready for afternoon lessons, displays and equipment were no longer damaged, and litter was reduced. Different year groups played games together and interacted more. Pupils settled to work more quickly after doing physical activity and afternoon lessons became much more purposeful, with fewer incidents of disruption or poor behaviour.

Pupils' activity levels rose. About 200 boys took part in football on areas set aside on the AstroTurf each day in the winter. Twenty to 30 girls played netball on another area of the AstroTurf. In the summer, much of the AstroTurf area was used for tennis. Twenty-five pupils each day collected passes at break and attended the table tennis club (there are only four tables so no space for more). The dance club attracted about 30 pupils each day. The basketball area was always full of pupils practising and organising their own games. In total, about a third of the whole school was involved in PE-related activities.

There are a number of ways which schools have improved their break and lunchtime activities.

- Using questionnaires, pupils' playground behaviour can be analysed leading to discussion with pupils on the types of spaces and equipment which they would like to see.
- Peer mentoring schemes at breaktimes can be introduced. Schools that have tried peer mentoring schemes at breaktimes have found that children are more able to choose suitable activities; can keep games going longer; are less likely to experience bullying; and can resolve conflicts in the playground. Further information on peer mentoring schemes is available from the Global Gateway website, the details of which are included in the Resource Pack accompanying this document.
- Advice can be sought from organisations such as Learning Through Landscapes about ways in which the available play space can be utilised more effectively to benefit all pupils.
- Play space can be split into discrete areas for different types of activities.
- Sociable seating arrangements, in circles rather than lines can be provided.
- Natural materials, such as trees, grass and bushes to break up large spaces, can be provided.
- Alternative activities such as plastic tennis racquets, skittles and skipping ropes can be provided. Blackboards can also be painted onto walls outside and large chalk provided for pupils to use.

Sources of further information

Further information about the advice and guidance available from Learning Through Landscapes can be found at www.ltl.org.uk

Further information about Global Gateway – Playground Fun, including advice sheets and checklists can be found at: <http://www.globalgateway.org.uk/Default.aspx?page=2575>

The NUT advises that where members require additional advice and guidance on any issues relating to lunchtime cover they should contact their NUT Regional Office.

EXTENDED SCHOOLS

Many schools, however, are developing extended school activities. An extended school can offer a varied menu of activities such as homework clubs and study support, sport (at least two hours a week beyond the school day for those who want it), music tuition, dance and drama, arts and crafts, special interest clubs such as chess and first aid courses, visits to museums and galleries, learning a foreign language, volunteering, business and enterprise activities.

The NUT is calling for a commitment from the Government that all new childcare provision, children's centres and provision through extended schools should be inclusive and meet minimum standards for the quantity and quality of indoor and outdoor space, designed for children's physically active and creative play.

It is important to note also that additional activities outside school are voluntary and may involve both separate contracts and payments. The NUT advises that where members require additional advice and guidance on any issues relating to extended school and/or out of school provision they should contact their NUT Regional Office.

Key Stage 3 and 4

A large secondary school in an area of high unemployment began coaching table tennis in 1993 at an after-school club. In 1999 a full-time coach was appointed at the school as part of its extended school provision and since then many pupils have won competitions at national, county and district level.

According to OFSTED, *'The appointment of a full-time table tennis coach has contributed to improving standards and her involvement in lessons and extra-curricular activities has proved to be an asset to the school.'*

Key Stage 1 and 2

A primary school in the North of England set up an after-school drama club as part of its extended school programme. Initially the school invited pupils who were shy and required language support to take part in the pilot activity.

A Key Stage 1 drama activity was set up and led by a drama teacher for an initial ten week period. The children in the group gained in confidence, their shyness disappeared and their use of language improved.

The Playing for Success initiative uses a playful approach to raising achievement for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 in literacy, numeracy and ICT. The programme encourages schools to extend their out-of-hours work with the community with more Playing for Success study centres in a wide range of football and other sports clubs. An evaluation of the scheme carried out in 2003 by the National Foundation for Educational Research¹⁶ found that *'pupils made significant progress in their independent study skills and self image, and parents and teachers noticed particular improvements in their attitudes to education'*.

¹⁶ Sharp, C., Blackmore, J., Kendall, L., Greene, K., Keys, W., Macaulay, A., Schagen, I., Yeshanew, T., *Playing For Success – An Evaluation of the Fourth Year*, National Foundation for Educational Research, April 2003

Other examples of play-based provision include:

- healthy breakfast clubs with incentives for pupils who eat a healthy breakfast every day;
- healthy living project – growing healthy foods and associated cookery linked to the school farm;
- developing a community/school radio station;
- Fitness and Fun club for Key Stage 4 girls;
- the opportunity for pupils to work alongside theatre groups and artists in residence;
- Young enterprise activities.

All of these extended school activities can be linked to curriculum objectives but also provide much wider enrichment outcomes for pupils.

Sources of further information

Further information on Extended Schools including theory, practice and issues can be found at www.infed.org/schooling/extended_schooling.htm

4Children is a national organisation promoting play and out of school care facilities for children: www.4children.org.uk

Further information on the Playing for Success programme can be found at www.dfes.gov.uk/playingforsuccess/

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

The rise in childhood obesity and illnesses such as the early onset of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease has highlighted the dangers of unhealthy lifestyles. The NUT believes that schools have an important role in encouraging children to make healthy life choices. Educating children on the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise can bring about both immediate and long-term improvements to their quality of life.

The NUT has produced a charter entitled *Every Child at School a Healthy Child*. The charter calls for certain key targets to be achieved if every child at school is to become a healthy child, including: the curriculum should promote healthy living messages; cooking should return to the curriculum; and every child should have the opportunity to take part in physical exercise at school.

In the NUT publication *Healthy Schools – a Resource for Teachers*, the NUT advised that ‘a healthy school policy should set out clearly the philosophy that underpins food and nutrition education and physical education within the school. It should focus on improving children’s health and well-being and specify the key messages that are to be promoted.’

As the NUT Healthy Schools Guidance suggests:

Exercise plays an important role in the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. It not only brings physical benefits but psychological ones too. Research has shown that it can help combat depression and raise self-esteem. The NUT believes that there should be a guaranteed minimum of 90 minutes physical exercise per week for all children in normal school hours. At present the advised two hours by Government can incorporate after-school activity, in which the majority of pupils do not participate.

Key Stage 1 and 2

An initiative to make Manchester playgrounds more stimulating is reported to be having a marked impact on children's health. One primary school has seen a 75 per cent increase in physical activity. Lunchtime coordinators have received training, playgrounds have been zoned into skipping, ball games and quieter areas and more equipment has been provided. The aim was to target children who did not normally get involved in exercise.

An evaluation found that in 111 primary schools, 94 per cent of teachers said that children were now more active at lunchtimes. They also reported that lunchtime accidents have been reduced, there were fewer incidents of challenging behaviour and children were much more settled.

Key Stages 1-4

The Fit to Succeed programme in Exeter sought to increase regular, structured physical activity among local schoolchildren. The scheme ran from 1998 to 2004 and evidence suggested that where increased physical activity took place alongside other initiatives such as healthy eating, there were measurable improvements in the classroom in terms of OFSTED and test results.

It was felt that the best way to disseminate the success of the programme was to produce a pack of physical activities to be distributed to all the schools in the county. Launched in October 2004 the *Take 10* pack included over 150 ideas for activity sessions, a teachers' guide and accompanying DVDs. The name *Take 10* derives from the fact that each activity is designed to last ten minutes. It is principally aimed at teachers and staff who supervise children in the playground. Thirty-five school sports coordinators have also been appointed who help to train staff.

The pack is organised around six themes which include running and chasing games, manipulation and coordination challenges and activities for small spaces such as the classroom. It was recognised that activity had to become part of the classroom culture if there was to be real change.

The pack was trialled in 12 schools. Heads in those schools reported that concentration levels were better and that children were more productive. Involvement in the Fitness to Succeed project has been linked to improved OFSTED and test results.

In addition to the *Take 10* pack, the programme has encouraged a range of physical activities such as active travel plans, involving walking or cycling to school. Currently 96 of the 373 schools have set up active travel plans while another 100 are in development. The aim is for all schools in the region to adopt them by 2010.

Sources of further information

The NUT *Healthy Schools* charter and guidance can be found at www.teachers.org.uk

Promoting physical activity in the playground can help to increase children's daily activity levels and improve their health. The Health Development Agency's Wired for Health website www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk includes suggestions as to how schools can promote physical activity at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Sustain is the alliance for better food and farming. Its Grab 5 project (see <http://www.sustainweb.org/page.php?id=161>) has a wide range of information on promoting healthy eating including a downloadable curriculum pack.

INCLUSION

Through procedures and play activities that are familiar and meaningful, the children can perform to the best of their abilities and unfold their potential.¹⁷

The NUT believes that the entitlement and access to play opportunities within schools should be equal for all pupils irrespective of race, culture and ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation. Set out below are a number of suggestions from teachers which may be useful in planning for play.

Ethnicity

Opportunities for play must reflect different cultures. The use of black dolls, for example, is a start but is not enough to make play opportunities truly inclusive. For young children, for example, a wide range of dressing up clothes, musical instruments, artefacts and cooking utensils should be available for imaginative play opportunities. Cooking skills taught across the key stages should also reflect different cultures, and sports on offer in schools should be wider than just those traditionally played in England and Wales.

Gaining a knowledge and understanding of their own culture and community helps children develop a sense of belonging and strong self-image. Each child has a culture defined by their community and more uniquely by their family. Role play provides an effective environment where children can explore their own culture and appreciate the similarities and differences in those of others. A positive self-image and high self-esteem give children the confidence and security to make the most of opportunities, to communicate effectively and to explore the world around them.

Schools and other settings should provide a safe and supportive learning environment, free from harassment and negative discrimination, in which the contribution of all children is valued and where racial, religious, disability and gender stereotypes and expressions of discrimination and prejudice are challenged.

For younger children role play areas and toys can reflect different cultures. When preparing role play areas in primary schools and early years settings, teachers can consider the range of artefacts which could be used to reflect pupils home experiences.

Visiting theatre and dance groups and workshops can facilitate education about different cultures and promoting diversity using a playful, fun approach. Such activities can be beneficial to pupils of all ages.

For older pupils role play activities, practical research opportunities and the opportunity to meet and work with role models from different cultures and ethnic groups can all provide opportunities for more playful approaches to learning.

¹⁷ Sayeed, Z. and Guerin, E., *Early Years Play: A Happy Medium for Assessment and Intervention*, David Fulton, 2000

Gender

Attitudes towards gender and what is seen as gender-appropriate behaviour are formed in early childhood. Children are not born with these fixed ideas, but learn them through the stereotypes that surround them. Children begin to label themselves and others as male or female accurately from about the age of two and soon after this begin to form clear links between these labels and different activities, toys, behaviours, and even adult occupations. For example: girls/women play with dolls and pretend to be nurses; boys/men play with cars and pretend to be firefighters.

By five years old many children have already internalised gender-role expectations, through the process of socialisation. Early years education, amongst other cultural and social factors, has an important role in young children's socialisation. Research shows that children as young as five begin to display disapproval of peers' role-inconsistent behaviours and are self-critical when judging how they would feel if they were playing with role-inconsistent toys. Young children monitor their behaviour against gender stereotypes, feeling pride on performing gender role-consistent behaviour.

Disability/special educational needs

Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities should be included in play activities within schools. Schools have a legal duty under the SEN and Disability Act 2001 to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage and to plan to increase access to education for disabled pupils. This includes access to all areas of the curriculum and also to all sporting and extra-curricular activities.

Toys and books for children should include disabled people and images. Schools should carry out a full audit of buildings and grounds, involving pupils where possible. All staff should receive training in addressing disability equality issues in schools.

Pupils with disabilities should be encouraged to organise some group activities around their own strengths – for example, 'guess the object in the black bag by touch' game led by a blind child and mime games led by a deaf child. The teacher will have to make careful observations of a child's strengths before planning for such an activity.

Use of story sacks which stimulate a range of senses are helpful to all pupils in bringing stories to life and increasing accessibility and understanding.

Schools should take care not to treat disabled pupils less favourably when making arrangements for school sports. The Disability Rights Commission found in a 2002 study that 11 per cent of disabled young people had missed out on school sports.

Sexual orientation

In the case of homophobia, the use of the word 'gay' is prevalent in primary schools and young boys who are perceived not to conform to masculine stereotypes are at risk of bullying, isolation and social exclusion. It is too late to wait until primary school to challenge prejudice and intolerant abusive language. Early years settings need to alert early years teachers to their responsibilities to challenge gender stereotypes and to challenge language that is negative or prejudiced.

It is particularly important to begin to make three to five year olds aware of the range of families that exist in the UK today: families with one mum, one mum and dad, two mums, two dads, grandparents, adoptive parents, guardians etc. There will be parents who are gay or lesbian who will want to be reassured that their children will be safe in the school or setting.

Many gay parents do not 'come out' to schools because they fear their children will be bullied as a result of the sexual orientation of their parents. Now that civil partnerships are legal, schools need to use the curriculum to educate children about all types of family and to promote respect and understanding. Increasingly there are resources such as reading books available for nursery settings which give positive examples of diversity. Play opportunities and playful approaches to delivering the curriculum provide a safe way for pupils to explore the issues of sexuality.

Although school staff may assume that they treat all children the same, perceptions of what is expected or appropriate for boys and girls remain a matter of personal, as opposed to professional, attitudes and vary widely.

- All staff should feel confident in addressing issues of sexuality which may arise in school which may need to be supported by specific training. Homophobia needs to be challenged and issues explained in an appropriate way to pupils according to their age and understanding.
- For young children role play areas can be used to allow them to act out situations which they may experience at home, such as having same sex parents. Such role play, coming from the children themselves, can provide staff with the opportunity to explain the nature of different family units to other children using this playful approach.
- Using a range of books depicting different family groups as a matter of course within the classroom or setting for early years and primary aged children can help staff to address issues of sexuality.
- For secondary pupils role play activities, drama (including researching, writing and performing their own plays about issues of sexuality) will provide the opportunity for discussion and information sharing in a depersonalised way.

Sources of further information

The Index for Inclusion: developing play, learning and participation in early years and childcare (CSIE-Tony Booth, Mel Ainscow and Denise Kingston – 2006) provides practical examples of how early years settings and classes in schools can evolve inclusive practices. The Index for Inclusion provides checklists for staff to ask themselves about their current practice.

Further information about the Index for Inclusion is available on the CSIE website (<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/indexlaunch.htm>).

Further information, guidance and practical suggestions are available on the Disability Equality in Education website (www.diseed.org.uk).

Participation data suggests that structural barriers rather than a lack of demand restrict female participation in activities such as football or rugby. The Womens Sports Foundation (<http://www.wsf.org.uk/>) is committed to improving and promoting opportunities for women and girls in sport at every level. It has produced information packs on women's involvement in sport, including an Olympic and Paralympic pack especially designed for schools.

Unlearning Discrimination in the Early Years, Babette Brown, Trentham Books, 2005. Examples of good practice show how young children understand issues to do with racism, sexism, disability and homophobia when encouraged to do so.

The Kids National Development Division offers a wide range of training and aims to deliver a strategic programme to support the delivery of the Every Child Matters objectives for disabled children. See www.kids.org.uk for more information.

The NUT advises that where members require additional advice and guidance on any issues relating to inclusion or equalities issues they should contact their NUT Regional Office.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The NUT provides detailed guidance on how to conduct sensible risk assessment. Further information is available in the document *Risk Assessment: NUT Health and Safety Briefing* which is available to download from the NUT website www.teachers.org.uk

There is also a wide variety of support available to schools from other sources to help them get the balance between risk and pupils' developmental needs right.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) says that *'the opportunity to play creatively in high-quality environments is essential to the development of children'* (RoSPA information Sheet Number 22-Design of Play Areas). Further information on risk assessment, inspection and the safety of play environments is available from the RoSPA website at www.rospace.com/playsafety.

Further information on Playlink is available at www.playlink.org.uk

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) view is that people managing play areas should focus on the real risks that cause harm and injury, rather than the minor risks that prevent children from doing enjoyable and exciting things. They say: *'Children encounter risks everyday; HSE recognises that it is not possible to eliminate all risks. We believe that children should not be discouraged from taking part in activities that carry an element of risk, but rather that the risks they do encounter should be sensibly managed.'* Further information on the Health and Safety Executive is available at www.hse.gov.uk/

ANNEX A

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES: REPRODUCED WITH KIND PERMISSION FROM ELIZABETH WOOD AND JANE ATTFIELD¹⁸

1. SHARING VALUES, BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT PLAY

This task can be carried out in a team, in collaboration with parents, or could be used as part of a whole-school or whole-setting focus on the quality of play.

Each member of staff should write a short account of an episode of good quality play. The episode can be indoor or outdoor play; solitary, parallel, or cooperative; with or without an adult present.

Members of staff should work together in small groups to discuss what characterises good quality play. The following framework could be used for analysis:

- the type of play observed;
- number of children;
- resources available;
- how the resources were used;
- whether an adult was present and what role the adult played;
- time available, layout of the classroom/play area';
- the learning processes, dispositions and outcomes observed.

The outcomes of the analysis should be written on a large sheet of paper and shared/contrasted with another group. If the task is used as part of a whole-school focus on play, the analysis could inform the development of a policy on play, taking into account continuity and progression across the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2.

What implications does this analysis have for your practice? See Tasks 2 and 3.

2. ARTICULATING PERSONAL BELIEFS AND THEORIES ABOUT PLAY

Drawing on your knowledge and experience, and the analyses of play in practices from Task 1, brainstorm and discuss the following questions:

- How are playing and learning linked?
- How do different play contexts promote different areas of learning?
- What conditions are needed to support children's learning through play?
- Are these conditions always present in your classroom/setting?
- Are there differences between your idealised vision of the value of play and what actually happens in your practice?

¹⁸ Wood, E. and Attfield, J., *Play, Learning and the Early Childhood Curriculum*, Paul Chapman, 2005

- Can you identify what constraints there are in your practice, and how these impact on the quality of your provision for play?
- What targets do you need to set in order to improve the quality of play in practice?
- How might some of the constraints you have identified be addressed?

Discuss and share your ideas within a group. You could use some of the examples and transcripts of play in this book, or carry out and analyse your own observations. A ten-minute episode can provide much valuable information for discussion and analysis. What targets would you prioritise for improving the quality of play? (See Task 3).

3. **EVALUATING AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF PLAY**

This task can be used to carry out an audit of existing provision and set targets for improvements across a period of time (short, medium and long-term). The audit can be used flexibly to examine:

- individual areas of provision, e.g. construction, tactile play, socio-dramatic play;
- features of provision, e.g. resourcing, curriculum planning, classroom management, teaching and learning styles, adult interaction, assessment and evaluation;
- current provision.

What issues and concerns arose from Tasks 1 and 2 in relation to supporting good quality play in pre-school and school settings? Organise these issues into the following areas.

Planning

How do you set aims and objectives for play activities – short, medium and long-term?

Do you provide opportunities for intended learning outcomes and possible learning outcomes?

Do you provide opportunities for teacher-directed and child-initiated activities? (Accurate match, negotiated curriculum).

Are your aims and objectives related to the Foundation Stage Stepping Stones and Key Stage 1 programmes of study (breadth and balance)?

Are the activities appropriate for the children in your class? You should consider individual rates of development, learning styles, equal opportunities, differentiation.

Does your planning reflect equal opportunities issues – ethnicity, gender, special educational needs, cultural and linguistic diversity, cultural sensitivity?

Does your planning identify opportunities/strategies for assessment?

What rules are set and how are these negotiated and communicated to children and staff?

What kinds of play activities and behaviours are encouraged, tolerated, ignored, or banned? And why?

Organisation and Implementation

Are you using the available space to good effect? (Consider provision for indoor and outdoor play).

Are there any shared spaces outside classrooms that could be used effectively for play areas? How might this be negotiated with other members of staff?

What resources are available?

Are they of good quality and variety?

Do the resources support children's progression in learning through play?

Are the resources clearly labelled and accessible to the children?

How much is made available for play?

What are children's agendas in different play contexts?

Can children's agendas be accommodated within the overall planning framework?

Do children have opportunities for extended periods of time to follow through their planning and investigations and develop themes and ideas?

What opportunities are provided for teaching through play, either through intended learning outcomes or spontaneous responses to activities?

What are the nature and quality of interactions between children/between adults and children in different play contexts?

Are the adults in your setting 'good players'? Are they responsive to children's agendas and can they engage sensitively in play activities without taking over or directing the play?

Assessment and Evaluation

What opportunities exist for play-based observation and assessment?

What strategies for assessment to practitioners use?

Are these strategies used effectively to understand and discuss children's learning through play?

Do practitioners understand and use the six forms of assessment?

Do practitioners discuss children's play at home, with parents and caregivers?

Do practitioners share documentation with parents and caregivers to compare/contrast perceptions of children in different contexts, and chart their progress?

Target-Setting

What areas have been identified for curriculum development? (Short, medium and long-term).

What strategies will be used to achieve the targets set?

Who will be involved (including parents and carers)?

What help is needed?

How will that help be provided?

4. **DESIGNING A PARTICIPATORY CURRICULUM**

What opportunities do you currently provide for children to participate in making choices and decisions?

You might like to consider:

- the design and organisation of the learning environment;
- the use of space;
- the use of adults;
- the location and labelling of resources;
- gaining access to materials and resources;
- opportunities for free play, negotiated play, directed play;
- opportunities for children to express their ideas, opinions and concerns;
- opportunities for children to represent their ideas, opinions and concerns through a variety of media;
- your own beliefs, values and attitudes.

How might you work towards or extend a participatory curriculum?

ANNEX B

A CHARTER FOR PLAY

1. *Acknowledge* its unique contribution as a process by which young children learn.
2. *Plan* for it as an integral part of the curriculum and not an 'added extra'.
3. *Facilitate* it with appropriate and high quality provision.
4. *Act* as a catalyst when intervention is appropriate and a scaffolder when expertise is required.
5. *Observe* it in order to have first-hand evidence of children's learning.
6. *Evaluate* it in order to better understand the needs of the learner
7. *Value* it through comment and commitment in order for its status in the classroom to be appreciated.
8. *Fight* for it with rigorous, professional argument in order to bring about deeper understanding and acceptance by colleagues, parents, governors and the community at large.

Julie Fisher¹⁹

¹⁹ Fisher, J., *Starting from the Child: Teaching and Learning from 3 to 8*, Open University Press, 2002

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